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ABSTRACT

This biannual review of research describes promising research models that are helping all students, including students with disabilities, manage their own behavior in school settings. The common features of school-wide systems of behavioral support are identified and include: (1) total staff commitment to managing behavior; (2) clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules; (3) consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors; (4) an instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies; and (5) a support plan to address the needs of students with chronic challenging behaviors. Different models of school-wide behavior management are highlighted. The Effective Behavioral Support system, a team-based approach that is designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior, is explained. Also described is the Cheney model, a process that seeks to include students with emotional disturbances in general education classrooms by teaching and supporting prosocial behavior and identifying consistent school-wide responses to challenging behaviors. Finally, the Unified Discipline school-wide approach to behavioral management is reviewed. This model emphasizes unified attitudes among teachers and school personnel, unified expectations for behavioral instruction, unified consequences when classroom rules are broken, and unified team roles for all school personnel. The document concludes with tips from practitioners on how to make school-wide behavior management systems wor; and descriptions of how Utah and Pennsylvania are exploring school-wide behavioral supports. (Contains 10 references and a list of contacts for further information on the research referenced in this issue.) (CR)

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This Issue

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Behavioral management techniques, a longtime focus of special education research, are being integrated into school-wide systems. This issue describes this promising research that is helping all students manage their own behavior in school settings.

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School-Wide Behavioral Management Systems

A Promising Practice for Safer Schools

For over a quarter of a century, the number one concern facing public schools in this country has been discipline. What educators are finding, however, is that the root of the problem goes well beyond rule-breaking. Many of today's students need more than just sound and consistent discipline policies—they also need positive behavioral instruction.

"Schools are finding that traditional compliance-based discipline has little effect on children who have significant problems getting along with others," explains Vermont-based independent consultant **Jonathan Udis**, whose work focuses on helping schools address the behavioral needs of students. Udis is witnessing a new emphasis on student self-control and responsibility. "Strategies are preventive, provide social problem-solving options to punishment, and offer respectful and dignified ways to ensure the safety of all students."

Across the country, educators like Udis have been seeking new ways to move beyond traditional "punishment" and provide opportunities for all children to learn self-discipline. Simultaneously, researchers have begun to study and advocate for broader, proactive, positive school-wide discipline systems that include behavioral support. One promising avenue for achieving the dual goals of teaching self-discipline and managing behavior is school-wide behavioral management.

Beginning on page 2 we'll take a brief look at a few of these school-wide programs that are beginning to emerge from the research. At this point in time, most school-wide programs are found in elementary and middle schools. However, because the basic principles transcend age-levels, there is a growing trend to move these programs into secondary schools.

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School-Wide Behavioral Management: Emerging Models

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of school-wide behavioral management systems and what it takes to implement these systems effectively. While it is too early to offer "recipes for success," the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments.

While there are different variations of school-wide systems of behavioral support, most have certain features in common (see box). The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. As a result, approaches necessitate professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership for this innovation to take hold.

The following school-based models have been selected to show how different features of a school-wide behavioral management system can apply across urban, suburban, and rural locations. In all cases, the schools we feature understand that change is incremental, and are approaching implementation of their school-wide systems slowly and over an extended time period.

Common Features of School-Wide Behavioral Management Systems

- Total staff commitment to managing behavior, whatever approach is taken.
- Clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules.
- Consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors.
- An instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies.
- A support plan to address the needs of students with chronic, challenging behaviors.

Effective Behavioral Support

For researcher **Tim Lewis** at the University of Missouri, providing a school-wide unified approach to behavior management meets several objectives:

- Students with disabilities who display challenging behaviors can be more successful in the school environment where support structures are in place.
- Students who are not identified as disabled, but present challenging behavior, receive specialized services via individual teaching interventions in addition to the school-wide support structures.
- A system with a prevention focus may reduce the severity of subsequent problem behavior.

Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) refers to a system of school-wide processes and individualized instruction designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior and to maintain appropriate behavior. It is not a model with a prescribed set of practices. Rather, it is a team-based process designed to address the unique needs of individual schools.

Teams are provided with empirically validated practices and through the EBS process, arrive at a school-wide plan. Steps in the process include:

1. Clarify the need for effective behavioral support and establish commitment. This includes securing administrative support and participation. Priority for this should be reflected in the school improvement plan.

2. Develop a team focus with shared ownership.

3. Select practices that have a sound research base. Create a comprehensive system that prevents as well as responds to problem behavior. Tie effective behavioral support activities to the school mission.

4. Develop an action plan that establishes staff responsibilities.

> *"First and foremost, faculty and staff must agree that school-wide behavioral management is one of their top priorities"*
>
> *Tim Lewis*

5. Monitor behavioral support activities. Continue successful procedures. Change or abandon ineffective procedures.

According to Lewis, there are several factors that foster success. First and foremost, faculty and staff must agree that school-wide behavioral management is one of their top priorities and will probably require 3-5 years for completion. Second, teams must start with a "doable" objective that meets their needs and provides some initial success. Finally, administrators must support the process by respecting team decisions, providing time for teams to meet, securing ongoing staff training, and encouraging all staff to participate.

While these implementation issues are critical, probably the hardest hurdle educators must overcome

School-Wide Behavioral Management: Emerging Models (cont.)

will be shifting how they view problem behavior. Lewis explains that to make EBS work, teachers must respond to problems from an *instructional* approach rather than from a punitive one. "Many teachers will tell you that teaching appropriate behaviors is not their responsibility; yet, we know that for a growing number of students, negative sanctions have little effect and can actually increase problem behavior." Moreover, recent reviews of intervention research indicate that the most effective interventions are social skills training, academic and curricular restructuring, and behavioral interventions.

"The fear among many teachers is that there will no longer be consequences for inappropriate behaviors—which is just not the case." Lewis goes on to explain that with EBS, consequences are clearly defined and taught to the students.

How does a school staff get started with EBS? Let's take a look at how two schools are implementing the approach in Oregon and Missouri.

Implementing the EBS Approach in Oregon

During the 1994-1995 school year, the entire staff at Frances Willard Elementary School in Eugene, Oregon, participated in EBS training. They agreed to implement EBS over several years with their entire population of 100 students.

The first year, teachers agreed on a set of school rules for classroom, hallway, cafeteria, and lunchroom behavior. They selected two school-wide behavioral management systems for implementation. The first, which they called the "Self-Manager Program," gives students the chance to earn points for good behavior. These points are exchanged for the privilege of being a "self-manager"—a role that allows students to carry out special tasks such as running errands. The second strategy, dubbed the "Chance Ticket System," gave students a tangible reward for their behavior. Here's how it works. Each day, teachers randomly pass out tickets to students who are observed following the rules. At the end of the month, students attend the "Super Student Assembly," where they have the chance to receive tangible rewards in a prize drawing.

With these school-wide management systems in place, teachers tackled the Year 2 agenda, which was to develop social skills lessons for classroom instruction. Currently, Year 3 is focusing on strategies for dealing with the needs of students with chronic behavioral problems.

Teacher **Beverly Lewis** has been involved with the project from its start. She offers the following suggestions to other staffs considering adopting EBS.

- Arrange for training.
- Get commitment from the staff.
- Meet regularly for staff planning, feedback, and whole-school communication.
- Inform parents and expect some to object.
- Communicate regularly.
- Be consistent; individuals should not vary the rules.
- Have an additional procedure for children with chronic behavioral problems.

Getting Started with the EBS Approach in Missouri

When **Esther Richey**, Principal at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, first learned about the EBS approach, the school staff was already primed. "On an individual level, our faculty had committed to promoting positive behavior—what we needed was a total school process to carry it out."

Staff identified the five most critical components of effective instruction. Not surprisingly, discipline was the highest priority. "It was important for staff to state their concerns in a public forum—and it was important for any naysayers to have their views heard as well," Richey reports. She suggests that you reconsider options, such as only implementing the approach with part of the school, if you have strong resistance from any factions.

While only in the first year of what Richey views as a multiyear process, the staff is already entrenched in planning. To move the planning process forward, staff capitalized on the existing organizational structure—teacher teams. Currently, these teams are discussing the hows and whats of the school-wide approach that they hope to implement in the fall. To help coordinate the effort, a new school-wide team was established, which included rep-

Lewis' work is an offshoot of the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded project, PREPARE (Proactive, Responsive, Empirical, and Proactive Alternatives in Regular Education) at the University of Oregon, where George Sugai and his colleagues have begun implementing the approach in the Eugene, Oregon schools.

School-Wide Behavioral Management: Emerging Models (cont.)

> *"School-wide behavioral management systems allowed us to put into place a consistent, efficient process that supports students and teachers."*
>
> *Mark Zangari*

resentatives from each teaching team, a parent, and a student. According to Richey, this initial planning time is critical. "You must build in sufficient time at every stage of the process." She estimates that, to date, each team has spent about 6-8 hours, in addition to 2 half days for action planning.

Expanding Placement Options

Other researchers have been experimenting with school-wide behavioral management systems. As part of an OSEP research project designed to support systems change strategies for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, researcher **Doug Cheney** and his colleagues are studying school-wide management plans that (1) teach and support prosocial behavior, and (2) identify consistent school-wide responses to challenging behaviors.

The goal of the project is to increase the inclusion of students with emotional disabilities. Initial findings are encouraging—the implementation of school-wide structures appears to add to the presently existing continuum of services, which increases the school's ability to expand placement options for students with severe emotional disturbance.

In the Cheney model, schools

- Evaluate current use of school-based resources to meet educational, social, and emotional needs of students.
- Develop proactive school-wide management plans. This includes training the total faculty to use social problem-solving strategies for rule-violating behavior.
- Develop school-wide social skills training programs.
- Develop classroom environments that support cognitive and social development.
- Establish behavior support teams.
- Develop crisis prevention and intervention strategies for students with serious behavioral problems.
- Develop family support networks.
- Design strategies for using community agencies and supports.

After 4 years of working with Cheney, **Mark Zangari**, principal at John Fuller Elementary School in North Conway, New Hampshire, is sold on the approach. "We have in place a consistent, efficient process that supports students and teachers." The staff started by developing a unified code of conduct (see box, p. 5). When a child does not follow the code, teachers use a standard set of school-wide disciplinary procedures. When the behavior escalates above typical, low level classroom violations, the procedures include a social cognitive problem-solving component that asks the student, in written form, to

- Describe what happened.
- Describe what he or she did.
- Identify which conduct principles were violated.
- Explain the effect on self and others.
- Specify what needs to happen.
- Articulate the consequences.
- Plan how to prevent the transgression from happening again.

According to district psychologist **Richard Anderson**, the preliminary data on the district goal of inclusion are promising. Of all students, 80% are included in general education classrooms most of the day; 90% at least part of the day. Preliminary

analyses also show student gains on all subscales of the Walker-McConnell Behavioral Scale.

School-Wide Code of Conduct

- **Safety:** *Are my actions safe for myself and for others?*
- **Respect:** *Do my actions show respect for myself and for others?*
- **Honesty:** *Do my words and actions represent truth?*
- **Responsibility:** *Do my actions meet the expectation to take care of myself and be a dependable member of the community?*
- **Courtesy:** *Do my actions help make this a nice place, where people feel welcome and accepted, and where they can do their work without disruptions?*

Unified Discipline

As part of an OSEP-funded primary prevention project, **Bob Algozzine** and **Richard White**, at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, are studying a school-wide approach to behavioral management, *Unified Discipline.*

Four objectives drive the efforts to implement Unified Discipline:

- Unified attitudes: Teachers and school personnel believe that instruction can improve behavior, behavioral instruction is part of teaching, personalizing misbehavior makes matters worse, and emotional poise underlies discipline methods that work.
- Unified expectations: Consistent and fair expectations for behavioral instruction are a key to successful discipline plans.
- Unified consequences: When classroom rules are broken, teachers respond with consistent correction procedures. Using a warm yet firm voice, teachers state the behavior, state the violated rule, state the unified consequence, and offer encouragement.
- Unified team roles: Clear responsibilities are described for all school personnel.

Unified Discipline is being implemented at Windsor Park Elementary School in Charlotte with promising results. Teachers report positive attitudes toward its use, and there is preliminary evidence that suggests reductions in the nature and extent of office referrals.

Is a School-Wide System Right for You?

One of the first questions practitioners want answered is, "How do I know if a school-wide behavioral management system is right for my school?" Clearly, from a preventive stand point, researchers would agree that *all* schools can benefit from having a clearly defined, consistently enforced behavioral management system in place that is designed to support students in controlling their own behaviors. "With a school-wide system, the emphasis is proactive," explains **Tim Lewis**. "The entire school staff presents a unified front by being actively involved and committed to implementing the system."

In cases where school staff have significant concerns about discipline, a school-wide system may be a welcome solution. Researchers **George Sugai, Edward Kameenui,** and **Geoff Colvin** recommend that the need for a school to address and revise its school-wide discipline plan may arise from a variety of concerns, including:

- Academic and social behavior goals not being achieved.
- High rates of problem student behavior, resulting in loss of academic time.
- Behaviors are not managed consistently at a school level.
- Families and the community are dissatisfied with the school's response to problem behavior.
- Teachers express dissatisfaction with the current school-wide discipline plan.

When concerns are great, school leaders should review their existing discipline plan and determine if a school-wide behavioral management system—such as the ones described here—can address any inadequacies. Likely candidates include schools where existing discipline policies reveal inadequacies, such as unclear policies and behavioral expectations, lack of consistent procedures for enforcing consequences, and no existing structures for supporting students.

Summary

Reducing challenging behavior is hard work. The ultimate goal for schools is to implement a school-wide behavioral management support system that prevents problem behaviors while being responsive to the teachers and other staff members who work directly with the children. And, as the researchers described here will tell you, it takes consistency and ongoing training to make it work. However, by building a system of effective behavioral support, those school faculties that have "stuck with it" are beginning to see a real positive change in student behavior.

Views from the Field

As practitioners begin to embrace the promise of school-wide behavioral management systems, they are discovering tips for making them work, as well as pitfalls to avoid.

Provide Individual Support

"Don't expect all students to automatically do well with a school-wide discipline system," says **Kathy Pilewskie**, a behavioral specialist in the Toledo, Ohio, public schools. "Some students will need individualized support to be successful."

In recent years, Pilewskie has observed that a number of schools in the Toledo system have implemented school-wide discipline programs designed to remind students that rules should be followed. While these systems offer teachers and students a consistent approach to managing rules and rule-breaking behaviors, these school-wide approaches are often too broad and not specific enough to address the specialized needs of students with significant behavioral difficulties. The real challenge for teaching staffs will be to design individualized systems that are easy to use.

> *"Some students will need individualized support to be successful."*
>
> *Kathy Pilewskie*

For these tough-to-manage children, Pilewskie recommends individualized strategies, such as:

- Provide immediate feedback for positive behavior.
- Instruct students in how to follow the rules, step-by-step.
- Define consequences concretely, and directly teach students enforcement procedures.
- Use verbal interactions sparingly to remind students that they broke a rule; instead focus on the tangible consequences.

Put It in Writing

Developing school-wide discipline standards that all staff understand and adopt requires significant planning. For **Michael Rosenberg**, professor at Johns Hopkins University, to do it right, schools must also put those plans in writing.

Rosenberg assists local schools in the development of comprehensive management plans for all students. His approach, which he calls PAR (Preventing, Acting Upon, and Resolving Troubling Behaviors), leads building-based collaborative teams through a design process, complete with instruction in effective behavioral management practices. The result: a written discipline plan tailored to the particular school staff and children.

There must be team agreement on each of the plan's components:

- Mission statement.
- Rules and expectations.
- Consequences for rule violations.
- Crisis procedures.
- Procedures for family involvement.
- Ideas for adapting instruction.
- An implementation section which details the "hows" of putting the plan into action.

PAR results are proving promising. In one middle school, fights decreased 75% over 1 year; in two other middle schools, both referrals out of classrooms for disruptiveness and suspensions decreased approximately 50% over a 2 year period.

Include All Building Staff

"Every school employee—from bus driver to principal—has a role to play when it comes to providing a healthy environment for learning," says **Susan Gorin**, Executive Director of the National Association of School Psychologists. "The good news is that school-wide initiatives for safer, more effective schools are starting to emerge."

One of those programs is Project ACHIEVE, which has received OSEP funding. Spearheaded by school psychology professors **Howard Knoff** and **George Batsche** at the University of South Florida, ACHIEVE targets the needs of at-risk and underachieving elementary students by involving

- School staffs in a comprehensive strategic planning and staff development process.
- Students in school-wide interventions that prevent and respond to school discipline and social skills issues.
- Parents in school improvement.

Over a 3-year period, *all* building personnel receive training and technical assistance in techniques that have proven effective. Training is facilitated by pupil services personnel using a trainer of trainers model. Results for Project ACHIEVE pilot schools are promising. Data suggest a 75% decrease in student referrals to special education, 28% decline in total disciplinary referrals, and a drop in school suspensions from 9% of the student population to 3%.

> *"Every school employee—from bus driver to principal—has a role to play"*
>
> *Susan Gorin*

State Initiatives Support School-Wide Behavioral Systems

States traditionally have been concerned with identifying effective practices that lead to improved educational results for children. Utah and Pennsylvania are exploring school-wide behavioral supports.

Pennsylvania Initiative

In 1995, the state of Pennsylvania published guidelines for effective behavioral support. The challenge was to balance the rights of all students to a safe learning environment while providing effective programs for students with chronic behavioral problems. Since then, the state has provided training in the development of behavioral support plans (see box).

Support Plan Process

Step 1 - Conduct a functional assessment.

Step 2 - Develop hypothesis concerning the function of the challenging behavior.

Step 3 - Design and implement the behavioral support plan.

Step 4 - Evaluate effectiveness.

Step 5 - Modify the support plan as needed.

Tim Knoster, who directs the Pennsylvania Statewide Support Initiative, points out that schools can enhance individual students' performance by setting up support systems across different contexts:

- School-wide systems (i.e., discipline code). While most school systems have district-wide policies concerning student conduct, it is not unusual to find unclear policies and inconsistent understanding of them by staff and students.
- Guidelines, rules, and consequences for behavior in specific settings such as hallways, on the playground, etc.
- Consistent management practices across classrooms in a building. Staff from within each building need to be engaged in the reflective process of the search for a system of best fit for their building.

The key, Knoster emphasizes, is not for every school to look the same. Rather, school staff need to make informed decisions about how they can best support all children, adopt validated models, and provide training.

Systems Change in Utah

Originally funded by OSEP as a systems change project, the *Behavioral and Educational Strategies for Teachers (BEST)* project is now part of a statewide effort in Utah focused on bringing effective practices into classrooms and schools. Over the years, BEST has trained teams of teachers who conduct staff development for their colleagues. Model sites located throughout the state provide good examples of how BEST strategies look in practice.

BEST targets five areas for school-wide behavioral support:

- Student motivation.
- Social skills instruction.
- Discipline plans that have consistent rules and consequences.
- Research-validated interventions for students with chronic behavioral challenges.
- Positive family relationships.

According to **Deb Andrews**, Project Coordinator, districts or schools that want to implement a school-wide model need to commit about 5 years to the project. "School-wide approaches are not a quick fix...they require consistent leadership and must be implemented one step at a time." Andrews recommends starting with the development of a discipline committee. As part of the BEST approach, schools complete a preassessment that includes a section on school-wide behavioral management (see box). The committee then receives training in BEST strategies, comes up with a draft plan, and takes that plan to the building faculty for review and discussion.

Because each school will have different needs, it is critical that the faculty identify which validated research techniques they wish to utilize, rather than a particular one being imposed on them. Eventually, an action plan is developed for whole school involvement.

School Preassessment

Is there a school-wide behavior management program in place and was it started at the beginning of the year?

- Is there a high rate of positive feedback?
- Does the administrator use preplanned positive and reductive consequences?
- Are consequences based on school rules?
- Is there a plan for serious behaviors?
- Are staff visible throughout the school campus?
- Do staff anticipate problem behaviors and intervene early?
- Do parents participate in the school-wide behavior management system?
- Are there special behavior management programs for recess, lunchroom, etc.?

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